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Syn. 7. 68. 41

# EXHORTATION T O FRIENDS,

To keep in Remembrance, and prize the  
former Mercies, Blessings, Favours, and  
Deliverances, received from the Lord.

## With a Warning

Also to beware of the Enemies Workings, by careless  
Security, and fleshly Ease, in this Day of so large  
Liberty, and Freedom given, or suffered to come  
to pass, upon the account of Meeting, Worship-  
ing, and Serving of God.

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By a Servant of Christ, **John Bancks.**

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*All Things work together for Good to those that truly love God.*

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L O N D O N,

Printed, and Sold, by *Andrew Sowle*, at the *Crooked-Billet* in  
*Holloway-Lane* in *Shoreditch*, and at the *Three Keys* in  
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against the *Conduit*, 1687.

19. 20. 7. 492

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A N  
EXHORTATION  
T O  
F R I E N D S.

*Dear Friends.*

**M**Any have been the Mercies, Blessings, Priviledges, Favours and Deliverances ; that the Lord your God heretofore hath made you, rich Partakers, enjoyers, and living Witneses of, ( as you have stood faithful ) ever since the time he called and gathered you ; out of the World, by a Hand and Arm of mighty Power stretched forth.

And first of all, let me put you in minde, it was his Love, Mercy, and Good-Will towards you, in so calling and gathering of you : And it hath been through his Fatherly Care over you, that you have been preserved until now : For ever prize the same, and put a Value thereupon, in all Humility, before him ; even such, as because thereof he is worthy.

And now, *Dear Friends*, you know the good End of the Lord in calling and gathering of you : *To be a People to himself*, was not onely, That you should believe in his Name, but that you should also suffer, for *Truth* and *Righteousness* : And a great Work the Lord hath wrought in you, ( and also often for you ) by and through the greatness of his Power, and holy Spirit of Life, in order to fit, prepare, and furnish you, and give you Strength, that you might run the Race set before you, without Wearisomness or fainting ; where you met with many great Conflicts by the *Enemy within*, and deep Exercises, and hard Tryals without,

so that that saying was fulfilled in you; *Through many Tribulations, you must enter the Kingdom*: And yet, notwithstanding the Danger, on every hand, that caused Fear and Trembling sometimes. And notwithstanding the Rod of the Wicked was laid heavy, and with sharp Stroaks upon your Backs; yet through all this, the Lord your God, by the same Arm of Power and mighty Strength with which he gathered, brought you through, and over and beyond all these things, he hath wrought your Deliverance, and brought you to your desired Haven.

And was not these the Mercies, Blessings, Priviledges, Favours and Deliverances, that you received from his Hand, never to be forgotten: Many times, when little expected, neither inwardly nor outwardly; and in both respects, when your Travel and Exercise was great; when a little Peace was given, and Ease from Burthens felt; how sweet and precious was this unto you; and how did this tend to humble you before the Lord, and lay you low before him, to the renewing of your Acquaintance, Fellowship, and Communion, with him; and so one with and unto another near and dear.

Always keep these things in your Remembrance, *Dear Friends*, that like unto so many good Housholders, you may be found bringing forth, out of the good Treasure of your Heart, things both new and old, and yet all sweet and savory.

Oh the unexpressable Love and Kindness of the most high, in this calling and gathering of you, in quickening and giving Life unto you, by his eternal Spirit and Power; and in causing his heavenly pure Light to shine out of the Darkness, to give you to see your way: Out of the same, in which waiting, Life you might witness more and more. And oh, his Love and fatherly Care in feeding, refreshing, and nourishing of you; and causing his gracious Showers, to fall upon you his Plantation, that the Seed of Life and Righteousness might grow in you, in freshness and tenderness; that Drops might stand upon your Blade, because of the Moisture that is in the new Earth; (where Righteousness dwells) as Drops upon the Blade, that springs from the Seed that is sown: *They that have Ears to hear, let them hear what the Spirit saith unto the Congregation.*

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Oh, the Love, Mercy, and Good-Will of your God, unto you, who have stood faithful in your *Testimony-bearing*, for him and his pure Truth: In the Day of your Tryal, how hath he born up your Heads, over all his and your Enemies, that you might not sink in the midst of Troubles: And how hath he filled your Cups, and maintained your Cause; and returned an hundred Fold of Joy and Peace into your Bosoms, even when the Body was in Prison, and the Goods spoyled, and Husband separated from Wife, and Wife from Husband, sometimes unto Death: Hath not the Lord, in and through all these things, been as a Husband unto the Widdow; and more to the Wife, than she could either ask or think; and as a Father unto the Fatherless Children; and in the time, when as to outward Appearance, you might have wept and mourned, because of your deep Exercises: Have not you even then been made to rejoyce and give Praises unto God, ( who did not only count you worthy to believe in his Name, but to suffer for Truth and Righteousness ) and say with patient *Job* also, *The Lord gives, and takes away, &c.* ( or suffers so to come to pass. ) *Blessed and praised be his holy Name, and great Power for ever more.*

*Oh Friends!* Let these things be had in Remembrance by you, while you have a Being.

For how hath the Lord, by his great Power, gon before you as a King and Captain, to lead you on, who have counted nothing near nor dear to part with, that in Faithfulness you might freely and fully follow him, as *Caleb* and *Joshua* did; and that through both the Fire and Water, and notwithstanding the Winds and the Tempests too: And how hath he also followed you with his Mercies, Blessings, and Favours, when great Spoil and Havock hath been made of your Goods, and of what the Earth brought forth and afforded unto you; yea, how hath the Lord caused these things to grow and increase again abundantly, so that you have had good Cause to say, *You have been blessed in the Basket and Store*; and though some have had but little and small, having Meat, Drink, and Cloathing, let such, therewith be content, for so learns the Teachings of the Grace, that is sufficient in all States and Conditions.

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*Dear Friends*, let these things, come often under your Consideration, when you lye down and rise up, go forth and come in ; so shall you feel your Hearts and Spirits, wrought more and more into true Tendernefs and broakenness, to consider, and lay to Hart what the Lord hath done in so little a time, since his heavenly Day dawned : ( for may not I say to such as can read and understand ) *One hath chased a Thousand, and Ten put Ten thousand to Flight : The Work is the Lord's, the Praise and Glory thereof belongs unto him, to whom it is due, both now and for ever more, Amen.*

And now, *dear Friends*, hath the Lord, in his Love, Mercy, Kindness, and Good-Will to you, after a long time of your cruel Sufferings, great Tribulations, and deep Exercises, suffered, or caused a Day and Time of Ease, Freedom, and Liberty, to come home unto you, according to the Desire of your Hearts ; ( not to be expected as to outward Appearance ) which hath freed you from your suffering Condition, both Body and Goods, in divers Respects, and in many Places : Which, although it doth not reach to free me from my Bonds, yet, the Lord knows, I am truly content with my State and Condition, and no more weary than I was the first Day I entered the same : And my Heart is glad, and my Soul rejoyceth, upon the account of what is already extended unto many *Friends*.

One Hour of such a Day and Time, once, by many, would have been greatly valued, when Prisons were full, Houses and Shops broken up ( Goods spoyled ) and Meetings also greatly disquieted, by wicked *Informers*, and others ; surely such a Day as now is, or as I said, one Hour of it, would have been greatly prized, as a Mercy from the Lord, and no doubt, but much desired by many ( and also laboured for with much Care and Diligence by others. )

And, *dear Friends*, is the Day and Time now come, and yet continued ( how long, I shall leave to the Lord ) of so large Liberty and Freedom, as I need not mention ; and is it not prized by all as a great Mercy, Blessing, Favour, and Deliverance, being many Prison Doors are set open, and Wife enjoys her Husband again, and Children their Parents, and our Meetings continued unto us in a most peaceable manner : ( *Praises to God on high for ever.* ) I say, is not this prized by all, I hope it is by many ;  
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and my Desire is, it might be by all ; for what a great Pitty were it, that such a rich Mercy, Benefit, and Priviledg should by any be undervalued, or not considered and prized according to the Worth of it, and what is really in it, or what it may produce, if made right use of.

But I fear, and have a Godly Jealousy ( wherefore an Exercise hath attended me many Days, some Weeks, and Months, until at last I was made to write, ) That there is some that is so inconsiderate and unmindful of the Mercies of the Lord, that they rather requite him Evil than Good herein.

Oh ! let all take heed and beware, That because of the present Day and Time, of so large Liberty, Ease, and Peace, that none take more Ease, Pease, and Liberty unto your selves, in Meeting, or out of Meeting, than becomes you professing Truth : No, no more you ought to take, than if it were a Day of great Tryal, and deep Exercise ; for still you have an unwearied Enemy to war with, that neglects no Opportunity that may make for his Purpose, by many Temptations within, and evil Counsellors without.

And though it be not now a Time for him and his, to rage and roar, as though he and they would devour all at once, yet he will be creeping now in his Cuning and Subtilty more misteriously and hiddenly to darken within, and to vail within, to hurt and hinder your Growth in the Truth within ( by presenting some delightful Object without ) and there is no way to have him discovered, nor to receive Power against him, but by waiting and watching with Diligence ( and true Fear ) in the pure Light of the Son of God, of Righteousness and Glory ; and therein Power is received, whereby the Power of Darknes is trod down, and kept under ; so that he will be known to rule and reign, whose Right it is, who is God over all Heaven, and the whole Earth, blessed for ever more.

It is the Work of the Power and Prince of the Air and of Darknes, and that evil Spirit, where it gets Place and Rules, to do what Hurt it can amongst the tender Plants of God's Plantation, to stop and hinder the Work of God ; as that rending Spirit of Separation in and by those that entertained it ; hath used all its cunning Craftiness, by creeping in the Dark to hurt and  
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spoyl within, and so make Breaches and Separations without, by such wicked Instruments as is fitted by it : For it's plain and evident, which may greatly tend to confirm all *Friends* against it, and to convince those that are of it, That this Spirit and Power, that they pretend to be the Spirit of Truth and Power of God, is not the Spirit of Truth, nor the Power of God : For though such be Preachers by it, and from it, they never have been instrumental since they were of it ( I believe, and am fully perswaded, and have often considered ) to convince any of Sin, or gather any out of the World ; only their Work has been, and still is, to deceive the simple gathered, and to prevail upon the Wise and Rich, which is grown to love Ease and Pleasure more than God, his Truth and People, and are got into a false Liberty, and Looseness attends them, because they love not to bear the Cross, and live in self-denial ; and because they that are of that Spirit, loves and likes Ease and Liberty so much to the Flesh and carnal Minde. This present juncture of time might have seemed, or served to have wrought their Work in, but that they have already so far manifested themselves what Spirit they are of ( to all whose Eyes are open ) by flying and hiding themselves in the time of Persecution, and keeping *Friends* out of their *Meeting-Houses*, like other Persecutors : So that now they can do little more Harm, though they creep here and there ; for that Snake-Spirit hath shot its Sting both Head and Tail, and spent the greatest of its Strength, so that any Child of God now may tread upon it, without Hurt or Danger.

So, *dear Friends*, how can it otherwise be, but all those Things, rightly considered, shall greatly tend to confirm your Faith against it, never any more to touch with it ( nor them that are of it ) and also open the Eyes of others, taken as in a Snare, and hurt by it, to break the Snare and come forth from them that are of that Spirit, that such may be restored and healed : As many as have escaped, let them prize God's Love therein for ever.

I say, they never, I believe, since they received that Spirit I have described, been Instrumental to Convince any of Sin, or gather any out of the World to God ; so it's plain such are none of his sending, sitting, nor preparing : No, no Ministers of Christ, but of him that is opposite to Christ, speaking from a dark Power and



and Spirit gathers into the Darkneſs out from the true Light, where People cannot ſee the true Way.

For the Work of the true Miniſters of the everlaſting Goſpel, was and is, and was and is ſtill made ſo inſtrumental, to gather from and out of the Darkneſs into the true Light and Life, and ſo into the heavenly Power, the heavenly Man ( that was before the Power of Darkneſs was ) Chriſt Jeſus the Power of God, there to ſit, live, move, and have a Being; where this earthly, dark, ſeparating, envious rending Spirit cannot reach nor come, for it hath its Power from below, out of the Pit of Darkneſs, where its Habitation and Dwelling-Place is; *Out of which the Lord God of my Life, keep and preſerve you all, my dear Friends, in your Habitations of Light, Life, and Power, there for evermore to live and Dwell.*

I ſay, let all take heed and beware of the Deceitfulneſs of the Enemies Workings in the Dark, who from the beginning ſtill wrought Man's Miſery, by getting an Enterance upon him by his Lyes, contrary to the Knowledg God gives to the Sons and Daughters of Men by his Light of Grace ( of his Will and Mind ). who undoubtedly will now perſwade to fleſhly Eaſe, careleſs Security, worldly Mindedneſs, to ſeek Self and its Intereſt ( if the Watch be not carefully kept ) which for want of, hence it is Darkneſs enters ſuch, and Deadneſs comes over them, and a Spirit of Slumber and Dead-ſleeping takes place, which is both a Thief and a Robber; and ſo the Spirit of Truth not being minded, to lead and guide, the Spirit of the World gets in, and ſo moves, and draws, and leads into the Earth and earthly Things, and inſtead of labouring to be rich in Faith and good Works towards God, ſuch labour chiefly how to grow Rich in the World, that they may have great Subſtance to leave to they know not who.

And all this looſe Darkneſs and Inſenſibleneſs comes to attend a Man or a Woman, though Truth may be profeſſed, for want of waiting and watching with Diligence in the Light of Jeſus Chriſt, the antient and ſtanding Principle of Truth, and becauſe the daily Croſs to the Will and Mind that leads out, is not born and lived in.

And ſome, for want of a right prizeing and valuing the preſent Mercy, ſo largely enjoyed, ſuffer a high Mind to rule them, which leads too above the Fear of God, and out of a Sence and Feeling

of the pure Truth in themselves, and so walk not orderly.

So, *Dear Friends*, every where, as wise Men and Women, old and young, have an Eye about you, in the Fear of God, and in love to his Truth, as those that is ordered and guided in his Wisdom, that all People may see you are no more heightened, because of Peace and Liberty, no more than cast down in a Day of Tryal. But that all may see, beholding your good Conversation, coupled with Fear, that you are as those that are bowed before the Lord, under a deep and true Sence of this his present Mercy, (not forgetting those heretofore received : ) For although the Lord may be pleased to make Man instrumental, or work upon his Heart to answer him in this or any other thing, it is unto him alone, that is the Author and Original of all Good, that you are to look and return the Praise, Honour, and Glory for ever ; though we would not withhold that from Man neither that is his due, which is found in doing well, which is acceptance with God, and worthy of Commendation and Praise by all his People, who do heartily pray and wish, to continue all, or any one of such, that is so found unto the end of their Days.

And so, *Friends*, being kept and preserved ( as I have said ) before the Lord and all People, you will be kept of the blessed Apostles Perswasion ; who says, *I am perswaded that neither Life nor Death, Principalities nor Powers ; things present, nor yet that which is to come, shall be able to separate me from the Love of God that is in Christ Jesus.* So let all take heed, although all things here named that is past, or at least some of them you have been tryed with or in that, that which is present do not heighten above what it meet, for if so, you see what it will separate from ; but keep low in the even Way, the middle Path, where no Extream is, where you will be kept humble and meek ; and its such the Lord Teacheth, prizing and valuing every Mercy and Favour you receive from him : But who can or doth so prize any thing to the worth of it, and to have such an Esteem thereof, as those that have known the want of the same.

For its very rare in these to prize Liberty, Freedom and Ease to the worth thereof, so as to have that Esteem of it which it deserves, that never knew what Bonds, Trouble and Suffering were. Yea its as rare in such, as for a Man and Woman to prize Health

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and Strength, that scarce ever knew what Sicknefs, and to be attended with Weeknefs has been ; or for thofe to prize the worth of Bread that never knew the want of it.

Yea, its even thofe chiefly, that has born the heavy Burthen of fuffering Imprifonment, and fpoyling of Goods ; and has been fo ftraitly kept to the impairing of their Health, that is ready to cry out and fay, *how deeply are we engaged unto the Lord for the enjoyment of this Mercy of fo large Liberty and Freedom.*

Oh that you may never forget nor be unmindful of the fame, though I know, the honeft hearted and well minded, that has their Eye to God, and love him, his Truth and People above all, though never called to fuffer, they are ready often to fay in their Hearts ; *Though I have never, or feldom have been exercifed as other of my Friends, yet I cannot but be mindful of their fuffering State and Condition ; and when they fuffer I fuffer with them, and when freed, eafed, or at Liberty : Oh ! I am made truly glad, fo as that I am engaged, with them, to praise the Lord therefore, in the receiving of fuch a Mercy, Bleffing and Favour.*

And the bleffed Effects produced by all thofe that prize the Mercies and Favours they receive from the Lord, is wherein God's Love is manifefted to them, they prifing and valuing the fame, it engageth the Lord to give them more abundantly to partake thereof, and conftains them to love him again, and if poffibly, to requite the Lord with doubling of their Diligence, as thofe that are fo far from taking more Liberty unto themfelves, becaufe of the Liberty that is given, that they find themfelves the more engaged, to meet often amongst God's People in all their Meetings, not only as to Worfhip, but Men and Womens Meetings fet up and ordained by the Power of God, for to do fervice there for him, his Truth and People ; for Eafe and Liberty, not made right ufe of, brings forth little but Idlenefs and Unprofitablenefs, and no way fit to do Service for God.

For it's only thofe that keeps out of the extream Hights and Depths ( too high and too low ) that has the Profit, and truly reaps the Benefit of this Day of Freedom and Liberty : And that in truth, it is to them a fweet and comfortable Mercy and Favour, amongst many received from the Lord, and fuch is deeply concern'd to prize it, that they may be fenfible of the End wherefore the Lord hath fuffered it fo to come to pafs, which is as all

in Faithfulness waits upon him in the close Retiredness of the Mindes, they may receive that from him, whereby they may grow strong in him, through the might of his Power, in Faith and Patience, in Boldness and Courage to ~~stand~~ *stand* in that in which you have begun, for its Faithfulness unto the End that crowns all.

And so, *dear Friends*, in the Name of the Lord go on, and *do not sit down by the Way*, and in Faithfulness follow your Captain the Lord Jesus Christ, that never leaves nor forsakes those that follow him, that you may have good Cause to say, as those that hath made right Use of the Day and Time of God's Love and Mercy, in giving Ease and Liberty as well when exercised in and under Suffering (*come what will come, the Will of the Lord be done.*)

And all who make not use of this Days Mercy, as I have said, and for that End and Purpose wherefore the Lord hath suffered it to come to pass, (which is to engage and establish his faithfulness to his People) the end thereof will rise up in Judgment against them.

So, *dear Friends, Brethren and Sisters* every where, all be awakened unto Righteousness to serve the Living God, as you ought to worship and serve him, which is with all your Hearts, Might and Strength, and with all you have and do enjoy that is the Lord's, who are redeemed unto him by his Power: The Lord God of *Israel* keep and preserve you faithful, on this wise serving of the Lord and one another in Love, for the increase of Life and Unity amongst you; and that while you have a Day to live, and an Hour of Breath to draw, is the Supplication and Travail of my Soul and Spirit unto the Lord for and on your Behalf, into whose blessed and fatherly Protection I commit and commend you all, to be kept and preserved, where Safety and Preservation is for evermore.

From my Prison-House in  
Carlisle in Cumberland, the  
8th. Day of the 7th.  
Month 1687.

Who is your Friend and Brother is  
the Truth that is living and precious  
though a Sufferer in outward Bonds, for  
the Testimony of Jesus, and of a good  
Conscience.

John Bancks.

Let this be read in the Fear of the Lord and with Understanding,  
the Meetings and Families of Friends.

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